February 26, 2008 WOMT Meeting

Smelt Working Group Recommendation:
Maintain the 7-day combined Old and Middle Rivers (OMR) flow more positive than –2,000 cfs.

Proposed Modified Recommendation:
The members of WOMT discussed modification of the SWG's February 25 recommendation. In response to the "heightened level of concern" for adult delta smelt, as defined by the 2005 Biological Opinion, the Project agencies would manage project operations to target a 7-day combined OMR flow more positive than –3,000 cfs. The projects will begin ramping OMR flows downward on February 27 and will begin to target OMR flows at –3,000 cfs on February 28.

To better assess the emerging risk to larval delta smelt, DWR has conducted additional particle tracking modeling (PTM) to refine the resolution of data output for OMR flows ranging from –2,000 to –5,000 cfs in 500 cfs increments. This analysis shows that entrainment risk is sensitive to the selected time step for evaluation. An evaluation of an appropriate time step for PTM, to better capture the effects of proposed export operations on a weekly basis upon the distribution of the delta smelt throughout the Delta, will be conducted for use by the WOMT. Additional information regarding delta smelt population susceptibility, based on our current understanding of the delta smelt distribution, should be conducted and made available to FWS and SWG early next week. This proposed recommendation will be reassessed at next week's WOMT meeting.

Rationale:
It is believed that the proposed modified action will be adequate to protect a substantial portion of the current delta smelt population based on the latest Spring Kodiak Trawl Surveys and on the biological assumptions that larval smelt do not immediately become buoyant in the water column after spawning, and that wide-spread spawning is likely just now beginning. Management of OMR flows at –3,000 cfs should also provide an adequate level of protection to any limited number of larval delta smelt that may be distributed throughout the Delta. The additional PTM modeling results will allow for further evaluation of particle distribution throughout the Delta for various OMR target flows under current hydrologic conditions, and provide a better understanding of the susceptibility of the Delta Smelt population as a whole to the effects of the Project exports.